The Effect of Perceived Feedback-Seeking Motives on Feedback Givers' Effort

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Although people are generally motivated to perform well in their job roles, there is often ambiguity regarding whether they are meeting their organization's standards. As such, people often seek feedback from others. To date, feedback-seeking research has emphasized the feedback *seeker*, identifying traits and circumstances associated with feedback-seeking. However, far less is known about this process from the feedback *giver's* point of view. This is an important omission, because delivering high-quality feedback requires effort, and we expect that feedback-givers will vary in the degree to which they are willing to allocate effort toward delivering feedback. Specifically, we predict that effort allocated toward a feedback episode will be determined by the feedback-*giver's* perceptions of the feedback-*seeker's* motives for seeking feedback. We predicted that perceived instrumental motives (a desire to improve one's performance) would be positively related to the amount of effort put toward delivering feedback, whereas perceived image enhancement motives (a desire to impress the feedback giver) would be negatively related to effort allocation. A field study wherein managers were asked to report on a recent episode in which a subordinate had sought their feedback provided initial support for these predictions. We also present results from an experimental study conducted to replicate and extend upon the first study. This research speaks to the often-overlooked role that the feedback *giver* plays in feedback-seeking. It sheds light upon factors that influence the quality of feedback that seekers receive, which could affect the likelihood that feedback-seeking will result in improvements in the seeker's future performance.

Keywords: feedback-seeking, performance, effort, feedback-giver

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Introduction

It can often be difficult for employees to know whether their performance conforms to organizational standards. Many work tasks offer employees little information by which to judge their own performance (e.g., problem solving, customer service, proposal writing), and formal performance evaluations typically occur only annually or bi-annually (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Kromrei, 2015; Murphy, 2020). Therefore, employees are often personally responsible for estimating and regulating their own day-to-day performance. As a result, employees often seek feedback about their performance from managers, coworkers, and their environment. Feedback is an important developmental tool, and can improve work performance by providing information (Gong et al., 2014), helping workers to recalibrate goals (Ashford & Tsui, 1991), and motivating increases in effort (Northcraft et al., 2011). However, a meta-analysis of the feedback-seeking literature found that the relationship between feedback-seeking and subsequent performance was weak and variable, indicating that simply seeking feedback may not always or consistently lead to improved performance (Anseel et al., 2015).

One potential reason for the relatively weak relationship observed between feedback-seeking behaviour and subsequent performance is that feedback-givers may not always allocate high levels of effort when responding to requests for feedback. In order to provide high quality-feedback, individuals must recall the feedback-seeker's task-relevant behaviours, integrate recollections, compare them against organizational standards, and clearly (and often sensitively) convey that information to the feedback-seeker (Landy & Farr, 1980). In other words, providing high-quality feedback requires effort. However, feedback-

givers may not always have ample time or energy to allocate to providing feedback, and may therefore have to make *strategic* decisions about the level of effort they devote to providing feedback, saving resources for instances in which they believe the feedback-seeker intends to use the feedback they receive to improve. We propose that in order to make these decisions, feedback-givers form perceptions of the motivation behind feedback-seekers' behaviour, and use these perceptions to determine the appropriate level of effort to allocate toward providing feedback.

Specifically, we predict that feedback-givers use perceptions of subordinates' feedback-seeking motives to determine the amount of effort to allocate to giving feedback. We propose that feedback-givers may use their perception of a seeker's motives as an indicator of the likelihood that the seeker will use the feedback they receive to make future performance improvements. In other words, whether they will likely see a return on their investment of effort. To this end, we conduct two complementary studies in which we examined the relationship between perceived feedback-seeking motives and the level of effort allocated toward delivering feedback. In Study 1, we asked managers to reflect on a recent situation in which they had responded to a subordinate's request for feedback. Doing so allowed us to assess the relationship between perceived feedback-seeking motives and effort within a natural work setting. In Study 2, we conducted an experiment in which participants acted in the role of a manager providing feedback to a hypothetical subordinate. We manipulated the subordinate's motives for seeking feedback, and had participants provide written feedback, which allowed us to obtain effort measurements that did not rely on self-report.

We employ both survey and experimental methodologies so that we may address the weaknesses of each method with the strengths of the other. Specifically, the field or survey study allows for the capture of the relationship between perceived feedback-seeking motives and effort as it naturally occurs. However, the self-report measure of effort used in the field study may be tainted by demand characteristics or social desirability. Conversely, the experimental study enabled us to determine causality of the relationship between perceived feedback-seeking motives and effort. However, the experimental setting of study two may not be completely reflective of the phenomenon as it naturally occurs, as ultimately, the depicted subordinate is ultimately not someone whom participants actually have an ongoing working relationship with.

Overall, this paper makes several important contributions to the research literature. First, we identify potential instances in which feedback-givers have little motivation to allocate effort to providing feedback (i.e., are likely to provide low-quality feedback); namely, when they do not expect that the feedback-seeker will use the information they receive to improve their future performance. Additionally, there is an emphasis in the feedback literature on the feedback-seeker, which results in an incomplete picture of the overall process, and consequently, the mechanisms by which that process breaks down or is inefficient. Specifically, feedback-givers have the critical responsibility of providing feedback to feedback-seekers, and it is presently not well understood how they receive, process, and respond to requests for feedback. Second, we consider perceptions of the motivation behind a subordinate's feedback-seeking, differentiating between perceptions of performance-improvement motives and impression management motives. This approach

helps us to better understand interpersonal aspects of the feedback-seeking process, as the social aspects of feedback-seeking are likely important in determining the outcome of the exchange (e.g., Levy & Williams, 2004). Thus, by considering the often-overlooked perspective of feedback-*givers,* we point to a potential explanation for the relatively weak and variable nature of the relationship between feedback-seeking behaviour and performance improvement.

Giving Feedback Takes Effort

To date, feedback-seeking research has emphasized feedback-seeking from the *seeker's* perspective, providing information about who is most likely to seek feedback (Krasman, 2010), why they seek it (Ashford et al., 2003), when they are most likely to seek it (Anseel et al., 2015), and from whom they are most likely to seek it (Nifadkar et al., 2012). However, less is known about the feedback-seeking process from the perspective of the feedback *giver*. We contend that this is a significant oversight, as feedback-givers play an important role in the outcomes associated with feedback-seeking behaviour. Specifically, we focus on the fact that providing feedback takes *effort,* and propose that feedback-givers likely vary the amount of effort they expend on any given feedback episode based on their perception of the likelihood that the feedback-seeker will use the information they receive to improve their performance.

Although ideally feedback-givers would always allocate considerable effort toward providing feedback, there are reasons to believe that this is likely not the case. Feedback-givers often face many competing demands on their limited resources (e.g., competing work tasks, requests from co-workers) and are likely in pursuit of multiple work-related goals at

any given time. Therefore, feedback-givers may not always have the time or energy to thoroughly respond to every feedback request. Studies examining competing goals in the workplace have shown that resource scarcity can drive individuals to divert effort toward tasks that are deemed to be most pressing, and away from other tasks that are more likely to be viewed as "optional", including personal development (Beck & Schmidt, 2013), leadership behaviors (Rosen et al., 2019), and exhibiting fairness (Sherf et al., 2019). Therefore, we predict that feedback-givers will *strategically* allocate effort when providing feedback, saving and marshalling resources for instances in which they believe that there will be a *return on their investment*. Providing feedback is an investment of time, mental effort, emotional regulation, and many other resources that are likely also needed elsewhere at work. In order for feedback to be a good investment of these resources, there needs to be a high enough likelihood that the investment will yield a return. These returns can take many forms, from needing to provide less feedback in the future, to having more capable coworkers and employees, to producing higher quality outputs.

To this end, we choose to focus on managers as feedback-givers as opposed to coworkers. Unlike coworkers, subordinate performance reflects directly on the manager (Manzoni & Barsoux, 1998), and the potential return on investment of effort put into feedback is likely to be much higher. That is, traditional organizations are set-up such that managers are responsible for the work of their subordinates, whereas co-workers are not (Doorewaard et al., 2002). Quite literally, subordinates "work for" their managers, meaning they perform tasks on behalf of their managers, whereas employees "work with" their co-

workers. Therefore, managers are invested in their subordinates' performance, and likely wish for their subordinates to improve.

Feedback-Seeking Motives as Signals of ROI

In order for subordinates to make these desirable performance improvements, they often seek feedback. However, research has shown that feedback-seeking behaviour is driven by various motives (Ashford et al., 2003; Dahling et al., 2015; Hays & Williams, 2011), meaning that people seek feedback for reasons other than performance improvement. Specifically, we focus on two of the most common feedback-seeking motives: instrumental motives and image enhancement motives. Instrumental feedback-seeking motives are characterized by the seeker's desire for new information, reduced uncertainty, and improved task performance (Ashford et al., 2003). We expect that a feedback-giver may be more likely to allocate resources to providing feedback when they perceive that the seeker is strongly instrumentally motivated because they expect that the seeker will implement feedback received. In other words, the feedback-giver will expect that if they invest effort to providing feedback, they will see a return via performance improvements by the seeker.

Instrumental feedback-seeking behaviour can be explained by self-regulatory theories of goal pursuit. Feedback is often necessary for the goal-striving process to work effectively, as one's current level of performance can be ambiguous, and people need to know how well they are currently performing in order to properly adjust their behaviour to meet their goal (Tsui & Ashford, 1994; Lord & Levy, 1994; Northcraft et al., 2011; Vancouver & Day, 2005; Carver & Scheier, 1990). That is, feedback can lead to performance improvements via improved understanding of their current performance level, thus helping individuals adjust

their behaviour in order to meet their desired goal (Parker & Collins, 2010; Ashford & Tsui, 1991). Indeed, research has shown that the more ambiguous the context of goal pursuit and the more likely feedback will assist in achieving a performance goal, the more likely that an individual will engage in instrumental feedback-seeking (Ashford, 1986; Tuckey et al., 2002; Ashford & Cummings, 1985). Additionally, there is evidence that instrumentally motivated feedback-seeking can translate to objective performance improvements (Hays & Williams, 2011), making it likely for managers to associate this kind of feedback-seeking with high performers (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

> *Hypothesis 1*: The amount of effort allocated toward a feedback episode by the feedback-giver will be *positively* related to his or her perceptions of the feedback-seeker's *instrumental* feedback-seeking motives.

However, as mentioned above, people also seek feedback in pursuit of goals unrelated to performance improvement (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Subordinates seeking feedback in pursuit of goals related to impression management or social standing are considered to be motivated by *image enhancement* (Ashford et al., 2003). Image enhancement feedback-seeking motives are characterized by the seeker's desire to improve the giver's perceptions of the seeker by highlighting his or her accomplishments. We expect that feedback-givers will believe individuals who are highly motivated by image enhancement may have little interest in actually improving their task performance, as they are seeking feedback in order to impression manage or show off. Therefore, feedback-givers may believe that effort allocated toward giving feedback to a person with strong perceived image enhancement motives is ultimately squandered.

In fact, there is some evidence that supervisors may find image-enhancement driven feedback-seeking off-putting, leading to a lower desire to provide that seeker with labor intensive feedback. Importantly, research assessing the relationship between feedback-seeking behaviour and quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) indicates that quality of LMX is only enhanced by feedback-seeking behaviour when supervisors perceive that the subordinate is motivated more by instrumental motives than image enhancement motives (Lam et al., 2017). That is, supervisors appear to have lower quality relationships with frequent feedback-seekers who seek feedback for image enhancement motives than those who seek feedback for instrumental motives. Additionally, unlike instrumentally motivated feedback-seekers, people highly motivated by image enhancement tend to seek less feedback when they are faced with uncertainty, as the potential for social cost associated with feedback-seeking increases under these circumstances (Anseel et al., 2007). That is, individuals highly motivated by image enhancement are likely to reserve feedback-seeking behaviour for work on which they feel that they have performed well (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Ashford & Northcraft, 1992). Supervisors may be able to detect the selectivity with which these individuals seek feedback, and may adjust their level of effort allocated to providing feedback downward because they perceive that the target on which the subordinate is seeking feedback may not need much improvement.

Therefore, although there is evidence to suggest that feedback-seeking behaviour can be an effective impression management technique (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992; Dahling & Whitaker, 2016), we nonetheless expect that feedback-givers will reduce the effort they

allocate to providing feedback the more they perceive that the seeker is motivated by image enhancement concerns. Specifically, we hypothesize that:

> *Hypothesis 2:* The amount of effort allocated toward a feedback episode by the feedback-giver will be *negatively* related to his or her perceptions of the feedback-seeker's *image enhancement* feedback-seeking motives.

Finally, it is important to note that these feedback-seeking motives are continua and are not mutually exclusive, meaning it is possible that a feedback-giver may perceive a feedback-seeker to hold some degree of both image enhancement and instrumental motives simultaneously. In particular, we expect that there will be an interaction between perceived instrumental feedback-seeking motives and perceived image enhancement feedback-seeking motives on level of effort allocated to providing feedback. Although managers may be willing to put high levels of effort into providing instrumentally motivated subordinates with feedback, they may be less likely to do so if they perceive that the subordinate is also highly motivated by image enhancement because. This is because, as previously discussed, feedback-givers may dislike seekers whom they perceive to be highly motivated by image enhancement concerns.

Additionally, social cognition research indicates that individuals are often more sensitive to information suggesting that others are disingenuous, relative to information suggesting that individuals hold ethically pure motives (Fiske et al., 2007). This negativity bias emerges due to evolutionary pressures that favour caution when assessing another person's motives in interpersonal interactions, but also because humans have a general cognitive tendency to focus on negatives over positives (i.e., "bad is stronger than good" effect; Baumeister et al., 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001). In other words, if a feedback-giver

perceives a feedback-seeker to have strong instrumental *and* image enhancement motives, the positive effect of perceived instrumental motives on effort will be washed out by the high level of perceived image enhancement motives. Specifically, we hypothesize that:

> *Hypothesis 3:* As perceived image enhancement motives increase, the positive relationship between perceived instrumental motives and effort will be attenuated.

Study 1: Field Study

To test our hypotheses, we recruited a broad sample of managers from a range of industries and asked them to reflect on a recent episode in which they had responded to a subordinate's request for feedback. Although there are measures of feedback-seeking motives from the feedback-*seeker's* point of view (Dahling et al., 2015), to our knowledge, the only measure of feedback-seeking motives from the feedback-giver's point of view was used by Lam et al. (2017). However, this measure included only two items to measure instrumental motives, and used perceptions of organizational citizenship behaviour in order to capture perceived image enhancement feedback-seeking motives, which we believe does not cleanly map onto the definition of image enhancement motives. Therefore, we decided to create our own measure of perceived feedback-seeking motives in order to capture a more complete picture of the constructs of interest. For details on the development of this scale, please see Appendices A and B.

Method

Sample. Participants were recruited from Amazon's MTurk. They first completed a pre-screening survey in which 620 out of 2000 screened individuals (31%) answered "yes" to the question: "Are you currently a manager at work?" One third of these managers (N = 206) had previously participated in a scale development study for this research (see Appendix B), and the remaining two-thirds of these managers (N = 414) were invited to participate in this study. Of the 414 participants invited, 193 completed all three waves of this study (retention rate = 46%). Participants who completed all three waves of the study did not differ from those who did not in age, $t(253) = 1.09$, SE =1.66, p = .275, gender, $\square^2$ (3) = 1.94, p = .586,

or managerial experience, $t(253) = .542$, $SE = 0.46$, $p = .462$. In line with best practice recommendations (e.g. Cheung et al., 2017; Meade & Craig, 2012), 19 participants were excluded on the basis of failed attention checks or duplicate responding. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 174 managers. The majority of the final sample was male (60%) and Caucasian (71%). The sample had a mean age of 40.09 years (SD =11.54), and an average of 8.18 years (SD = 7.39) of managerial experience. Participants were paid $1.00 USD for completing each survey, and a $2.00 USD bonus if they completed all three surveys.

Procedure. Data were collected across three time points spanning the course of one workweek (i.e., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) to reduce common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In the first survey, participants reported on demographics and completed measures of individual differences.[1] In the second survey, participants provided a brief written description of their most recent experience of a subordinate seeking feedback from them. Specifically, participants were asked to report who had asked them for feedback, and when this instance had occurred. Then, they were asked to write short descriptions of what the subordinate had asked them for feedback about as well as what they had been doing when the subordinate came to ask them for feedback. Participants also completed the measure of perceived feedback-seeking motives in relation to the feedback episode they had described. In the final survey, participants were shown their descriptions of the feedback episode from the previous survey in order to ensure they were reporting on the same episode.

[1] Individual differences collected were Implicit Person Theory (Dweck, 2000), Self-Monitoring (Wilmot, Kostal, Stillwell, & Kosinski, 2017), and Political Skill (Ferris et al., 2007). These variables were collected for exploratory purposes and are therefore not discussed further.

Participants subsequently reported the amount of effort they had put into giving feedback in that instance.

Measures.

Perceived feedback-seeking motives. We used the measure of perceived feedback-seeking motives developed for this research. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with 12 statements regarding the reasons their subordinate had asked them for feedback on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Sample item: "They sought feedback because they wanted to improve their job-related skills". The development of this scale is described in Appendices B and C. [2]

Effort. A measure of effort was adapted to our specific context from four items used to report effort on an anagram task in Schmidt and DeShon (2010). Participants were asked to rate their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Sample item: "I pushed myself to give good quality feedback."

Results

CFA. Prior to testing hypotheses, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis on our measurement model (i.e., image enhancement motives, instrumental motives, effort). As shown in Table 1, the three-factor model provided a good fit to the data. Furthermore, the three-factor model provided a significantly better fit to the data relative to all alternative two- and one-factor models, all of which did not fit the data well. Means, standard deviations, and correlations are presented in Table 2.

[2] We included the ego enhancement factor for scale development purposes (i.e., to test the factor structure of the perceived motives measure found in Scale Development Study 2). We found that the three-factor (instrumental, image enhancement, ego enhancement) model fit the data best, as theorized (CFI = .912, $RMSEA$ = .083).

Hypotheses testing. To test the hypotheses that perceived instrumental feedback-seeking motives would be associated with greater effort (*H1*), perceived image enhancement feedback-seeking motives would be associated with less effort (*H2*), and that the two motives would interact to predict effort (*H3*), we regressed effort on these two motives as well as their interaction term (see Table 3). Predictors were centered around their respective means to facilitate interpretation of the main effects (Cohen et al., 2003).

The results revealed that perceived instrumental motives significantly and positively predicted effort (b = .25, SE = .08, p = .003, R^2 = .04), providing support for *H1*. We also found support for *H2*, such that perceived image enhancement motives significantly and negatively predicted effort (b = -.11, SE = .05, p = .035, R^2 = .02). However, we did not find support for *H3.* Although the interaction term between perceived instrumental and image enhancement motives was statistically significant (b = .15, SE = .07, p = .029, R^2 = .02), simple slopes revealed that the nature of the interaction was not as we hypothesized. Specifically, whereas we predicted that the positive relationship between perceived instrumental motives and effort would be attenuated by higher perceived image enhancement motives, the opposite pattern was observed (see Figure 1). Namely, the simple slope of perceived instrumental motives predicting effort was stronger at higher (+1 *SD*) levels of perceived image enhancement motives, b = .40, SE = .11, $t(170)$ = 3.47, $p < .001$, relative to lower (-1 *SD*) levels of perceived image enhancement motives, b = .10, SE = .09, $t(170)$ = 1.11.

Discussion

We found support for our first two hypotheses in that there was a positive relationship between the giver's perception of instrumental motives and the level of effort the giver reported put into providing feedback, and a negative relationship between the giver's perception of image enhancement motives and the level of effort the giver put into providing feedback. These effects provide evidence that feedback givers do form perceptions of the seeker's motives, and more importantly, that these perceptions inform the level of effort that givers are willing to expend.

However, we did not find support for our third hypothesis. We had predicted that the relationship between perceived instrumental motives and effort would be stronger when perceived image enhancement was *low* rather than high. However, we found that the relationship was actually stronger when perceived image enhancement was *high* rather than low. That is, feedback-givers generally put consistent levels of effort into giving feedback, only adjusting their effort downward when they perceived that the seeker was primarily motivated by image enhancement. One potential explanation for our pattern of results is that feedback-givers are more sensitive to resource losses than gains, such that they are much more sensitive to making a "bad" rather than "good" resource investment. On the positive side, it is possible that the status quo is for supervisors to put higher amounts of effort into giving feedback for most people, rather than only conserving resources for those with more "pure" motives for seeking feedback.

Despite our ability to capture real feedback episodes from the workplace, this study is not without limitations. First, it is possible that the retrospective nature of our study affected

participants' responses. That is, managers may only have remembered, or felt comfortable admitting, putting forth lower levels of effort when the subordinate's perceived feedback-seeking motives were seen as particularly driven by image enhancement, and otherwise reported that they put higher amounts of effort into giving feedback due to social desirability. Second, we are unable to infer causality from our design. It is possible that feedback-givers adjusted their perceptions of the seekers' feedback-seeking motives based on the amount of effort they had put into providing feedback. That is, feedback-givers may have used their level of effort to explain or justify to themselves their perception of why the seeker was asking for feedback, rather than using the seeker's motives to inform the level of effort to allocate to providing feedback. Thus, to help alleviate and address these limitations, we conducted Study 2 to replicate and extend the results from Study 1.

Study 2: Experimental Study

In Study 2, we wished to employ a methodology that allowed for a method of effort measurement that did not rely on self-report, as well as the ability to manipulate the feedback-seeker's motives. Therefore, we had participants complete a manager in-basket style exercise wherein they were acting as the manager of a fictional advertising agency. Specifically, participants completed three tasks typical of managerial roles: a scheduling task, a budgeting task, and a feedback task. Unbeknownst to participants, we were only concerned with the feedback task. In the focal feedback-giving task, participants read vignettes describing a subordinate's feedback-seeking behaviour and subsequently provided that subordinate with feedback. The in-basket design allowed us to simulate the multiple demands managers often have on their time, such that providing subordinate feedback is only one of their many job duties.

Additionally, this methodology allows for both the manipulation of seeker's motives as well as multiple measures of effort allocated to providing feedback. We switched from directly examining the level of effort allocated to providing feedback to inferring the level of effort from the feedback itself. In doing so, we subvert the ability for participants to distort their own level of effort. Specifically, we examine both the quality and delivery of the feedback provided. Feedback quality captures the usefulness of the information contained in a feedback message, whereas feedback delivery captures the consideration with which the message is delivered. Although it is possible to put a great deal of effort into being inconsiderate when delivering feedback, we assume that it is much more likely for a manager to put effort into being considerate when delivering feedback. Indeed, research has shown

that being considerate when delivering negative news does require additional effort (Sherf et al., 2019). Therefore, when a manager fails to put effort into the delivery of their feedback, we expect that they will be perceived as being low on feedback delivery. Thus, we include delivery as an indicator of effort. Additionally, we included both quality and delivery of feedback as indicators of effort as they are both important factors in determining feedback related outcomes (Steelman et al., 2004).

Method

Sample. We recruited a new sample of participants with managerial experience from MTurk, excluding individuals who had participated in any previous study for this research. We ensured that participants had managerial experience by employing a pre-screen questionnaire. That is, participants answered three questions prior to viewing study materials (e.g., "Are you currently, or have you ever been, self employed?" "Do you currently, or have you ever, worked abroad?") and were only allowed to continue to the study if they responded "yes" to the following question: "Are you currently, or have you ever been, a manager at work?". We collected data from 520 participants, however, 155 participants were excluded for inattention. Although this was a higher number of exclusions than we had hoped, it is not entirely surprising given the fact that writing tasks are more time consuming and cognitively demanding than multiple choice or Likert-style tasks, and there is a large incentive for MTurkers to move through HITs as quickly as possible. An additional two cases were excluded due to duplicate responding, leaving a final sample of $N = 363$ to be included in analysis.

The final sample was 61% male, 72% Caucasian, had a mean age of 36.91 years (*SD* = 10.05), and an average of 6.16 years (*SD* = 5.56) of managerial experience. Participants were paid $1.00 USD for simply completing the survey, and were told they were also eligible for two bonuses (up to $4.00 USD), described in greater detail below.

Procedure. Prior to viewing study materials, we ensured that participants had managerial experience using the pre-screen as described above. Qualifying participants were then told that they were performing a managerial in-basket task and that they had a total of 15 minutes to allocate to three tasks as they saw fit. That is, they could spend as much or as little of the 15 minutes on each task; however, they could not return to a task once it was completed. They were told that they were eligible for two bonuses. The first bonus was $3.00 USD, and participants were told that they would receive this bonus for paying attention while completing the study. We gave all participants who filled out the text boxes in the survey with relevant text this attention bonus in order to incentivise careful reading of the materials and full attention to the study. The second bonus was a $1.00 USD performance bonus. Participants were told that the top 35% of performers on the task would receive this bonus. They were also told that all three tasks were weighted equally in determining their overall performance, and that both the speed and quality of their work would be taken into consideration when determining their eligibility for the performance bonus. In reality, all participants who received the $3.00 USD attention bonus also received the $1.00 USD "performance" bonus.

After reading the instructions, participants began the in-basket exercise. First, they were randomly assigned to complete either the scheduling filler task or the budgeting filler

task first. Next, all participants completed the focal feedback-giving task. Specifically, participants were shown one of the four vignettes wherein an employee, a graphic designer named Joe, asked for feedback on a logo he had created for a client (see Appendix C for full vignettes, Appendix D for the logo). The vignettes were comprised of two parts: an email from Joe (i.e., the subordinate requesting feedback), and a short description detailing Joe's feedback-seeking history with his manager. Both the email and description of Joe's past behaviour were manipulated to display either high or low levels of image enhancing and instrumental feedback-seeking motives. These vignettes were piloted with a separate sample of participants ($N = 168$), and we found that our manipulations were perceived as intended. For more details regarding this pilot study, see Appendix E. Participants were then asked to provide Joe with written feedback regarding the logo in a text box directly below the logo. Next, participants completed the filler task they had not already completed (i.e., if they had already done the budget task, they did the scheduling task or vice versa). Lastly, participants provided their demographic information and were debriefed with a feedback letter.

After collecting the data, we compiled all instances of feedback given to Joe by participants in a blind file. In order to screen responses for inattention, the first and second authors coded the written feedback that participants provided in the focal task. Responses were retained if they met the following criteria: the feedback provided was original text (i.e., not copied and pasted from either the study materials or another source), the feedback both mentioned and included an evaluation of, or opinion on, either the target of the feedback (i.e., the logo) or the employee seeking feedback (i.e., Joe), and the feedback was coherent. Initial

agreement between the two coders was 95.96%, and the remaining discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

Next, the first author and a research assistant independently coded the retained responses for quality and delivery of the written feedback. Each rater provided a rating on 13 statements, eight of which were intended to measure feedback quality, and five of which were intended to measure feedback delivery. Specifically, each rater indicated the degree to which they agree with 13 statements regarding the feedback message, such as "Overall, this feedback is of high quality" and "This person was tactful when giving Joe performance feedback." Three of these statements which were intended to measure feedback quality were developed for the current research. The remaining 10 statements were taken from the Quality (k = 5) and Delivery (k = 5) subscales of Steelman et al.'s (2004) Feedback Environment Scale.

After the raters finished coding the feedback, we computed the Pearson correlation between each rater's assessment of each of the 13 statements. Specifically, Rater 1's response to Statement 1 was correlated with Rater 2's response to Statement 1, and so on for each of the 13 statements. Next, composite scores for each of the 13 statements were computed by averaging across the two raters (e.g., S1 = [R1S1 + R2S1] / 2). However, we decided a priori only to retain composites with an interrater reliability of .65 or higher because reliabilities lower than that indicated that there was a substantial difference between the raters' interpretations of that statement as it applied to the feedback being rated. It was important to ensure that the raters had a common understanding of each statement before we aggregated the statements into scales in order to ensure that there were indeed two factors

(quality and delivery) being assessed. That is, if the raters did not interpret the statements in the same way, it would be impossible to know whether that statement fit with its intended scale because the ratings of that statement would have different meanings for each rater. Because the correlation between two raters provides an estimate of the reliability of a single rater (Ghiselli et al., 1981), we used the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula to estimate the reliabilities of each of composite statement scores. These values are presented in Table 4. After assessing the items in light of this cut-off, we were left with seven items assessing feedback quality, and four items assessing feedback delivery. Finally, the quality scale was computed by averaging the seven quality composites scores together into a single factor. The same was done with the four delivery composite scores.

We controlled for word count in all analyses for two reasons. First, participants were both motivated to get through the survey as quickly as possible so that they could move on to their next piece of work, and motivated to obtain the $3.00 USD performance bonus that we were offering. Therefore, there is reason to believe that they may have written a large number of words without allocating much effort to the quality or delivery of those words an attempt to move quickly while still obtaining the performance bonus. Second, although the raters were blind to the participants' condition and other response data as they were rating, both raters could see how many words participants had written when providing Joe with feedback. It is important to control for this possibility as longer pieces of feedback may be perceived as higher quality simply because they are longer (Kleinke, 1978). Therefore, in all analyses we controlled for word count of the feedback provided as the length of the feedback could have influenced the raters' opinions of the quality and delivery of the feedback. Additionally, we

divided word count by ten prior to conducting analyses in order to facilitate interpretation of regression weights.

Measures. We measured the quality and delivery of the feedback in order to assess the level of effort that participants put into providing feedback. See Table 5 for all retained items.

Quality. The quality of the feedback that participants gave was rated using five items adapted to be about the specific feedback context of our study from the Quality sub-scale of the Feedback Environment Scale (Steelman et al., 2004), as well as an additional three items assessing quality written by the authors. Each of the seven items was rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Sample items are: "This feedback would be helpful to Joe" and "Overall, this feedback is of high quality".

Delivery. Feedback delivery was coded using a version of the Delivery sub-scale of the Feedback Environment Scale (Steelman et al., 2004) that we adapted to be other-report specifically for our context. Each of the four items was rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Sample items are: "This person was supportive when giving Joe feedback about his job performance" and "This person was tactful when giving Joe performance feedback".

Results

EFA. First, we tested the factor structure of our two dependant variables (Quality and Delivery) by conducting an EFA using an oblimin rotation on each of the indicators. The scree plot revealed a two-factor solution. Factor loadings are presented in Table 5. All items loaded onto their respective intended factors and had cross-loadings below .11. These results

provide evidence that our two dependent variables captured distinct variance in the level of effort exerted in providing feedback.

Hypothesis testing. In this study, we collected two indicators of effort, feedback quality and feedback delivery. Inter-factor correlations, means, standard deviations, and scale reliabilities are presented in Table 6. In order to test the hypotheses that perceived instrumental motive would be positively associated with effort (*H1),* perceived image enhancement motive would be negatively associated with effort (*H2*), and that the relationship between perceived instrumental motive and effort would be attenuated by perceived image enhancement motive (*H3*), we conducted a regression analysis for each effort indicator (see Table 7). Results associated with each indicator are presented below.

Feedback quality. We regressed feedback quality on word count, instrumental condition (effect coded as high = 1, low= -1), image enhancement condition (effect coded as high = 1, low = -1), as well as the interaction between conditions. The results revealed that instrumental condition was a significant predictor of feedback quality (b = .09, SE = .04, p = .040, R^2 = .01), such that participants gave higher quality feedback when the hypothetical employee was perceived be higher on instrumental motives, providing support for *H1*. Additionally, we found support for *H2*, as image enhancement condition (b = -.10, SE = .04, p = .022, R^2 = .02) was a significant predictor of feedback quality, such that participants gave lower quality feedback when the hypothetical employee was perceived to be higher on image enhancement motives. However, we did not find support for *H3,* as the interaction between instrumental condition and image enhancement condition (b = -.03, SE = .04, p = .477) did not significantly predict feedback quality.

Feedback Delivery. We regressed feedback delivery on word count, instrumental condition, image enhancement condition, and the interaction between conditions. We found that instrumental condition was a significant predictor of the sensitivity of feedback delivery (b = .12, SE = .06, p = .029, R^2 = .01), providing support for *H1*. However, we did not find support for *H2* or *H3,* in that neither image enhancement condition (b = .03, SE = .05, p = .647) nor the interaction between conditions (b = .10, SE = .05, p = .062)[3] were significant predictors of the effort put forth in feedback delivery.

Discussion

Study 2 provides additional support for our argument that feedback-givers use their perceptions of feedback-seekers' motives when determining the level of effort to allocate to providing feedback. As in Study 1, we found support for our first hypothesis in that instrumental motives were positively related to both quality and delivery of the feedback given, and perceived image enhancement motives were negatively related to the quality of the feedback given. That is, feedback-givers tend to put more effort into providing feedback when they perceive that the seeker is high on instrumental motives, and less effort into providing feedback when they perceive that the seeker is high on image enhancement motives. However, we did not uncover relations between image enhancement motives and the delivery of feedback. Further, the two motives did not interact to determine level of effort exerted by the supervisor.

[3] We plotted this interaction as it was marginally significant, however, it formed a crossover interaction, which is not in line with either our predictions or the results from Study 1. It is, therefore, likely a chance occurrence as a result of our specific sample of the population.

There are a number of possible explanations for the null results. First, perhaps managers tend to put a high level of effort into the delivery of feedback so as not to seem rude or harsh, only adjusting this level of effort upward when they perceive that the seeker is high on instrumental motives. That is, perceived image enhancement motives may not affect the care with which a manager delivers feedback because there is some base level of courtesy with which managers tend to deliver feedback, which is unaffected by the perceived level of impression management of the seeker. Second, we may not have uncovered an interaction between the two motives on feedback quality or delivery due to the design of the study. That is, the vignette design did not capture the feedback process at play in long-term working relationships, wherein there would likely be more nuance in the supervisors' understanding of their subordinates motives in any given feedback episode.

General Discussion

Feedback-seeking behaviour allows employees to gather information about their current level of performance as well as potential strategies for performance improvement. Although much work has been done to better understand the feedback-seeking process, little research has focused on the perspective of the feedback-giver. In order to better understand the reasons for the often weak and variable relationship between feedback-seeking behaviour and performance (Anseel et al., 2015), we examined the critical role of the feedback-giver during feedback episodes. Across two studies, we found evidence that feedback-givers vary the amount of effort they allocate to providing feedback based on their perception of the seekers' motivation for asking for feedback. Specifically, feedback-givers allocated more effort to providing feedback the more instrumentally motivated they perceive the seeker to be, and put forth less effort in providing feedback the more motivated by image enhancement they perceive the seeker to be. That is, feedback-givers strategically allocate their effort when giving feedback, adjusting their level of effort downward when they perceive that the seeker is asking for feedback primarily for image enhancement reasons.

Theoretical Implications

Our research expands the literature on feedback-seeking behaviour by considering the feedback-seeking process from the feedback-giver's perspective, and specifically highlighting the giver's contribution of effort to feedback-seeking episodes. In order to better understand how feedback-givers make resource allocation decisions, we apply the concept of return on investment to the feedback-seeking context. In doing so, we highlight the fact that in addition to the well-known potential advantages of feedback-seeking, there are also

potential advantages of feedback-giving. That is, managers can use feedback as a developmental tool that reduces the amount of oversight their employees need, improves their team's performance, and thus their own performance, and develops their employees' skills. However, feedback is only a sensible investment for feedback-givers when the seeker actually uses the feedback they receive to make performance improvements.

Along these lines, we found evidence that feedback-givers vary the level of effort they are willing to expend when providing feedback. Based on our results, it appears that managers manage their time and energy by adjusting the level of effort they expend on feedback-giving to match the likelihood that they will reap the benefits of their effort in the future. Feedback-givers appear to use their perception of the motivation behind the seeker's behaviour to estimate the likelihood of getting a return. Additionally, the fluctuation in level of effort allocated to providing feedback means that although there are likely individual differences in feedback-giving ability, there is also likely fluctuation in the quality of feedback from episode to episode even within feedback-givers. This variation could help explain the relatively inconstant or variable relationship between feedback-seeking behaviour and performance that has been found in the literature to date (Anseel et al., 2015).

These findings are in line with past research suggesting that quality of LMX is negatively impacted by frequent image enhancement feedback-seeking (Lam et al., 2017), indicating that managers dislike when subordinates seek feedback for image enhancement purposes. Additionally, we provide preliminary evidence to assuage the concerns presented by Dahling et al. (2015), who suggested that low image enhancers may suffer consequences in the workplace due to perceptions that they may be weaker performers or less motivated to

perform well than high image enhancers. Their concern may not be warranted in that people seeking feedback for primarily image enhancement purposes receive lower-effort feedback than others. That is, instrumentally motivated seekers may be at an advantage because they receive higher quality feedback than seekers motivated by image enhancement. Over time, this lower-effort, lower-quality feedback, combined with lower LMX, may result in slower performance growth for people motivated by image enhancement compared to their instrumentally-motivated counterparts. Again, it seems as though feedback can be viewed through a return on investment lens, where seekers may see short-term benefits via impression management by seeking for image enhancement purposes, but in the long-term, seeking feedback for either instrumental, or both instrumental and image enhancement purposes is likely to be more beneficial to the employee, the manager, and the organization overall.

However, is important to note that there are additional possible theoretical explanations for our results. It may be that feedback-givers adjust the level of effort they allocate to providing feedback based on the type of feedback they believe the seeker is asking for. By definition, people seeking feedback for image enhancement reasons are soliciting positive feedback, whereas people seeking for instrumental reasons may be more open to negative, or a mix of positive and negative feedback (Ashford et al., 2003). Given that people dislike giving others negative feedback, and will actively avoid it if possible (Larson, 1989), it may be that managers simply put less effort into giving image-enhancing subordinates feedback because the positive feedback being solicited requires less effort than the mixed or negative feedback being solicited by people with high instrumental motives. The results from

Study 2 provide some support for this possibility. Specifically, the sensitivity with which the feedback was delivered was only predicted by the level of perceived instrumental motives, but not by the managers' perceptions of the seekers' image enhancement motives. It is possible that when managers perceived the seeker to be high on instrumental motives, and therefore more open to negative feedback, they put more effort into delivering that feedback sensitively, regardless of the seeker's image enhancement motives.

Practical Implications

Our work also has practical implications as we identify a potential target of organizational intervention. Specifically, organizations may wish to formalize the role of informal feedback-giving so their managers have sufficient time to allocate to this critical task, as well as provide training on feedback provision in order to reduce the amount of resources required whilst giving feedback. In doing so, organizations may decrease the necessity for managers to rely on perceptions of their subordinates and their feedback-seeking motives to determine the amount of effort to allocate to providing feedback. Additionally, this approach may increase the circumstances under which feedback-givers will provide quality feedback to their subordinates because they will have sufficient time and skill to provide high-quality feedback in a wider range of situations. In doing so, organizations may be able to cut down on feedback that does not yield sufficient benefits to justify its associated costs, allowing managers and subordinates alike to avoid wasting resources on feedback-seeking behaviour that does not improve the performance of the organization.

Overall, we highlight the importance of considering feedback-givers' experiences in the workplace. The majority of feedback-seeking research to date has focused on the

feedback-seekers' experiences (Ashford et al., 2016); consequently, ignoring a critical half of feedback dyads. It may be fruitful for organizations to turn their attention to providing support and training aimed at helping feedback-givers to optimize their effort allocation and feedback-giving ability.

Strengths and Limitations

The major strength of this research is the use of multiple methods. By employing both a field survey and an experimental study design, we balance the flaws of each method with the strength of the other. First, Study 1 made it possible for us to capture the phenomenon as it occurs in the workplace, where managers and subordinates have long-term interdependent relationships, which could complicate and add nuance to the relationship between perceived feedback-seeking motives and feedback givers' effort allocation. By observing the relationship between perceived feedback-seeking motives and effort in the field, we can speak to whether the relationship holds in the face of many additional contextual factors.

However, the self-report measurement of effort in Study 1 enabled participants to either lie or misremember the level of effort they had allocated to providing their subordinate with feedback. We were also unable to establish the direction of causation based on the method used in Study 1. That is, it is possible that participants reported distorted levels of effort based on their perception of the reasons the subordinate sought feedback and their perception of what is an appropriate level of effort to allocate to someone seeking feedback for those reasons. For example, a participant may have reported that they believed the subordinate to be seeking feedback for primarily instrumental reasons. Then, instead of reporting the true level of effort they allocated to feedback-giving, they may have reported a

high level of effort because they felt the subordinate was deserving of a high level of effort. We balanced this limitation by employing an experimental design, and directly observing the outcome of participants' effort (i.e. the feedback provided), in Study 2. That is, by manipulating the feedback-seeking motives portrayed by the seeker and randomly assigning participants to conditions, we were able to establish causation in Study 2. However, the experimental nature of Study 2 may over simplify the relationship between perceived feedback-seeking motives and effort compared to how it occurs in natural settings due to the more limited information and cues available.

Future Directions

One major avenue for future research in this area is uncovering the determinants of feedback-seeking motive perceptions as well as the accuracy of those perceptions. Although we found evidence that feedback-givers make judgements of seekers' motivations, it is presently unclear how they form these opinions, or whether givers' perceptions of seekers' motives align with seekers' self-reported motives. For example, there may be certain characteristics of employees (e.g., job role, performance, conscientiousness) that cause managers to make inaccurate judgements of the employees' feedback-seeking motives. A high-performing employee may be more likely to be perceived as image enhancing due to the high quality of the work they are soliciting feedback on, even when they are not highly driven by that motive. In order to move forward with possible interventions and theory in this area, it is important to further understand how feedback-givers form their opinions of the seeker and their motives for seeking feedback.

Additionally, it would be interesting to examine multiple feedback episodes involving the same feedback-giver and feedback-seeker at different points in time. This type of repeated-measures or experience sampling methodology would allow for an examination of within-person variance associated with effort allocation, as well the factors which drive these fluctuations. We chose to focus on the impact of feedback-givers' perceptions of seekers' motives, however, there are many more factors that could also determine the level of effort that a giver will allocate to any given feedback episode. This could include the feedback target, feedback-givers' confidence in their ability to provide feedback, interpersonal dynamics, gender dynamics, the subordinate's feedback-seeking frequency, and the feedback-giver's perception of the seeker's competence, to name a few.

Lastly, we found differing results with regard to the interaction between feedback-seeking motives on level of effort allocated to providing feedback in each study. Specifically, there was a significant interaction between perceived instrumental motives and perceived image enhancement motives on effort when participants self-reported their level of effort, but not when we measured effort based on the feedback participants provided. Although these differences were possibly due to study design factors, additional research is necessary to determine whether the two motives interact and whether the nature of that interaction is as we hypothesized or whether it is similar to the interaction found in Study 1.

Conclusion

Feedback has been shown to positively influence performance, and is one of the most prevalent performance management tools used by organizations today (Ashford et al., 2016).

However, feedback can take time away from other important tasks at work. Therefore, it is important to understand when and for whom these time and effort costs outweigh the benefits. Across two studies, we found evidence that feedback-givers vary the amount of effort they allocate to providing feedback based on their perception of the feedback-seeker's motives, allocating less effort the more they perceived that the seeker was motivated by image enhancement, and more effort the more they perceived that the seeker was instrumentally motivated. Overall, regardless of how well researchers and practitioners come to understand the antecedents and consequences of feedback-seeking from the seeker's perspective, feedback will never be an optimized tool in the workplace until there is also an understanding of the impact of the giver's actions and perceptions on the feedback process.

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Table 1

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Study 1 Measurement Model

	X^2	*df*	ΔX^2	Δdf	*p*	*RMSEA*	*CFI*
One factor	472.52	65	344.69	3	<.001	.190	.481
Two factor (IE+ Inst vs. Effort)	219.73	64	91.90	2	<.001	.118	.802
Two factor (IE + Effort vs. Inst)	386.21	64	258.38	2	<.001	.170	.590
Two factor (Effort+ Inst. vs. IE)	219.21	64	91.38	2	<.001	.118	.802
Three factor	127.83	62			<.001	.078	.916

Note. $N = 174$. IE = Image Enhancement, Inst= Instrumental. Changes in chi-squared and degrees of freedom are in reference to the three-factor model.

Table 2

Study 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

	M	*SD*	*1*		*2*		*3*		*4*
1. Instrumental	3.80	.64	*.65*						
2. Image	2.82	.97	.13		*.88*				
3. Ego	3.84	.82	.38	***	.31	***	*.78*		
4. Effort	4.26	.70	.17	*	-.13		.15	*	*.83*
5. Inst*Image	10.79	4.31	.50	***	.91	***	.39	***	-.02

Note. $N = 174$. Alpha coefficients are italicized and presented on the diagonal. $*p < .05$ $***p < .001$.

Table 3

Study 1 Regression Results

	Predictors	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1	Intercept	4.26	.05	82.56	<.001	.06	-
	Instrumental	.21	.08	2.63	.009		
	Image	-.11	.05	-2.12	.036		
Step 2	Intercept	4.25	.05	83.79	<.001	.08	.02
	Instrumental	.25	.08	3.04	.003		
	Image	-.11	.05	-2.13	.035		
	Instrumental*Image	.15	.07	2.20	.029		

Note. $N = 174$. All predictors are centered around their respective means.

Table 4

Inter-Rater Reliability of Quality and Delivery Items

Item	r_{xx}
Joe would consider this to be useful feedback about his job performance.*	.72
This feedback would be helpful to Joe.*	.75
Joe would value this feedback.*	.73
This feedback would help Joe do his job.*	.73
Joe would consider this performance information to be generally meaningful.	.61
This feedback is specific.*	.81
This feedback offered Joe a solution.*	.77
Overall, this feedback is of high quality.*	.81
This person was supportive when giving Joe feedback about his job performance.*	.71
When this person gave Joe performance feedback, he or she was considerate of Joe's feelings.*	.75
This person generally provided feedback in a thoughtless manner.	.37
This person did not treat Joe very well when providing performance feedback.*	.79
This person was tactful when giving Joe performance feedback.*	.67

Note. *Retained item. r_{xx} = Spearman Brown corrected inter-rater reliability between two raters.

Table 5

Study 2 Factor Loadings for Quality and Delivery Scales

Item	Quality	Delivery
Joe would consider this to be useful feedback about his job performance.	**.92**	.04
This feedback would be helpful to Joe.	**.96**	-.01
Joe would value this feedback.	**.85**	.14
This feedback would help Joe do his job.	**.95**	-.03
This feedback is specific.	**.87**	-.10
This feedback offered Joe a solution.	**.86**	-.02
Overall, this feedback is of high quality.	**.95**	.05
This person was supportive when giving Joe feedback about his job performance.	-.01	**.98**
When this person gave Joe performance feedback, he or she was considerate of Joe's feelings.	.00	**.98**
This person did not treat Joe very well when providing performance feedback.	-.01	**.87**
This person was tactful when giving Joe performance feedback.	.03	**.93**

Note. $N = 363$.

Table 6

Study 2 Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, Reliabilities

	M	*SD*	*1*		*2*		*3*	4		5	
1. Quality	3.55	1.03	*0.97*								
2. Delivery	3.74	1.06	0.37	***	*0.97*						
3. Word Count	5.52	3.42	0.59	***	0.22	***					
4. Instrumental Cond.	.10	1.00	0.15	**	0.13	*	.08				
5. Image Cond.	.01	1.00	-0.1		0.02		.02	-.14	***		
6. Inst* Image	-.14	.99	-0.02		0.11	*	.03	.02		.10	*

Note. N = 363. Inst*Image= Interaction between instrumental condition and image enhancement condition. Alpha coefficients are italicized and presented on the diagonal. *$p <$ .05, **$p <$ .01, *** $p <$ 001.

Table 7

Study 2 Regression Results

Outcome		Predictors	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	R^2	ΔR^2
Quality	Step 1	Intercept	2.57	.08	30.8	<.001	.36	-
		Word Count	.18	.01	13.7	<.001		
		Instrumental Condition	.09	.04	2.04	.042		
		Image Condition	-.10	.04	-2.39	.017		
	Step 2	Intercept	2.56	.08	30.61	<.001	.36	.00
		Word Count	.18	.01	13.67	<.001		
		Instrumental Condition	.09	.04	2.06	.040		
		Image Condition	-.10	.04	-2.31	.022		
		Instrumental*Image	-.03	.04	-.71	.477		
Delivery	Step 1	Intercept	3.37	.10	32.34	<.001	.06	-
		Word Count	.06	.02	4.01	<.001		
		Instrumental Condition	.12	.06	2.24	.025		
		Image Condition	.04	.05	.65	.517		
	Step 2	Intercept	3.39	.10	32.48	<.001	.07	.01
		Word Count	.06	.02	3.98	<.001		
		Instrumental Condition	.12	.06	2.20	.029		
		Image Condition	.03	.05	.46	.647		
		Instrumental*Image	.10	.05	1.87	.062		

Note. N = 363. Image= Image Enhancement. Instrumental condition and image enhancement condition were effect coded (high = 1, low = -1).

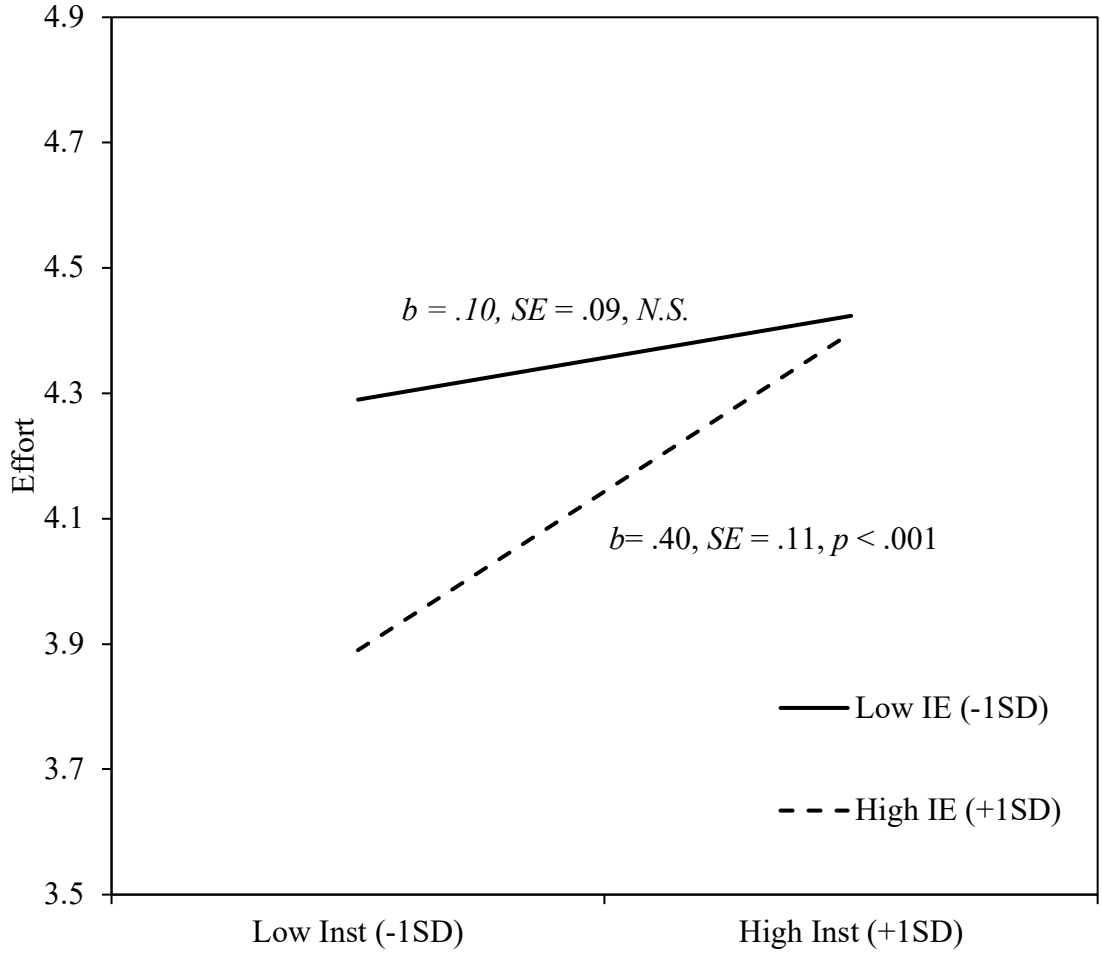

Figure 1. Relationship between perceived instrumental motives, image enhancement motives, and effort. IE= Image Enhancement, Inst= Instrumental.

Appendix A

Scale Development Study 1: Content Validation

We began by creating a list of items, and then sought to assess the content validity of our scale. In addition to instrumental and image enhancement feedback-seeking motives, we also included items to assess a third motive, *ego enhancement,* in our measure. Although ego enhancement has been identified as a feedback-seeking motive, there is little empirical evidence to inform predictions surrounding its role in the feedback-seeking process (Ashford et al., 2016). Thus, although we did not have specific hypotheses for ego enhancement, we nonetheless included this motive in our two pilot studies for the sake of completeness and in order to support future feedback-giver focused research.

Method

Sample. We collected data from a sample of 230 participants with managerial experience through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Participants received $1.00 USD for completing the survey. Forty-three participants were excluded due to incorrect responses to attention checks and 13 participants were excluded for responding in duplicate. Therefore, we had a final sample of 174 participants. On average, participants worked 35.28 hours per week (*SD*= 14.62), and the majority of participants either had some college experience (22.46%) or held a bachelor's degree (45.99%). Due to an error in data collection, we did not collect demographic information regarding age or gender in this sample.

Procedure. We first screened participants for managerial experience. We only included people with managerial experience because we intend to use the scale with managers in our subsequent studies. In other words, we wanted to keep the population that

we developed the scale with congruent with the population that will be responding to it. Therefore, participants were asked five questions in a pre-screen survey to make the inclusion criteria ambiguous (e.g. Are you currently self-employed? Are you currently a manager at work?). Only those who responded "yes" to the following question were invited to participate in this study: "Are you currently, or have you ever been, a manager at work?"

We began scale development by creating a list of 23 items (Table A.1), drawing from Dahling et al.'s (2015) measure of self-report feedback-seeking motives. Next, we assessed the content validity (Hinkin, 1998) of our scale by asking participants read definitions of the feedback-seeking motives that we provided and sort the items into their intended constructs (i.e., one of the three motives).

Results

To assess construct validity, we calculated each item's substantive agreement (p_{sa}), which represents the proportion of times each item was classified correctly, and substantive validity (c_{sv}), which takes into account the proportion of times each item was classified both correctly and incorrectly (Colquitt et al., 2019). Based on the norms presented by Colquitt et al., we used an a priori cut-off of $p_{sa} \geq 0.75$. However, when evaluating c_{sv} values, Colquitt et al.'s method does not account for the fact that we had more than two choices for categorizing each item. Therefore, we used Howard and Melloy's (2016) formula for obtaining a cut-off value for c_{sv} ($m = 99$). After evaluating each item in light of these cut-offs, 14 items remained (i.e., 5 Instrumental, 4 Image Enhancement, and 3 Ego Enhancement; see Table A.1).

Table A.1

Item Sort Results

Item	Motive	p_{sa}	n_c
Wanted to learn more about the performance expectations that others set for them. *	Inst.	.83	145
Wanted to improve their job-related skills. *	Inst.	.96	167
Wanted to "learn the ropes" after new performance goals and expectations were set for them. *	Inst.	.95	165
Were uncertain about their role in the organization.	Inst.	.63	110
Wanted information related to their duties in the organization. *	Inst.	.91	159
Wanted to understand whether they were meeting expectations. *	Inst.	.79	137
Were searching for hints that could help them improve their performance. *	Inst.	.93	162
Were attempting to strengthen the working relationship between you.	Inst.	.52	90
Were taking an opportunity to remind you of their accomplishments. *	IE	.78	136
Were using it as a way of emphasizing their good qualities.	IE	.74	129
Knew it would enhance the way you saw them. *	IE	.86	149
Were communicating to you that they are a good, responsible worker.	IE	.72	126
Were asking you for feedback on a task on which they knew they had performed well.	IE	.52	90
Were aiming to communicate to you that they are competent. *	IE	.75	131
Were showing off.	IE	.69	120
Were trying to influence how you see them. *	IE	.85	148
Wanted to feel better about their performance. *	EE	.83	145
Were looking for you to reassure them. *	EE	.81	141
Were insecure about their performance. *	EE	.75	130
Were proactively preventing you from giving them negative feedback.	EE	.49	86
Were trying to avoid criticism.	EE	.41	71
Wanted to maintain a positive view of themselves.	EE	.70	121
Were hoping you would make them feel more confident about performing a specific task. *	EE	.76	133

Note. Inst= Instrumental, IE= Image Enhancement, EE= Ego Enhancement. N_c= Number of times the item was correctly categorized (out of 174). $P_{sa} = N_c / N$. * Item was retained for the item reduction study.

Appendix B

Scale Development Pilot Study 2: Item Reduction

Method

Sample. A new, non-overlapping sample of participants was recruited from MTurk, and were paid $1.00 USD for their participation. Participants completed a pre-screening survey and 620 out of 2000 screened individuals (31%) answered "yes" to the question: "Are you currently a manager at work?" We invited one-third of these managers (N = 206) to participate in this scale development study, and the remaining two-thirds (N = 414) were later invited to participate in Study 1. Of the 206 participants who were invited to complete this survey, 142 accepted the invitation. After screening for failed attention checks, the final sample included 136 participants (54% Male, 75% Caucasian, mean age = 37.85 years [SD = 11.47]). On average, participants had 7.15 years (SD = 6.59) of managerial experience.

Procedure. Participants were asked to recall a recent instance in which a subordinate had asked them for feedback at work. We asked participants to briefly describe what their subordinate had asked them for feedback about, as well as the task they were doing when they had been interrupted by the feedback-seeker. Next, participants rated their agreement on a Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*), with each of the 14 items describing their perceptions of the subordinate's feedback-seeking motives.

Results. We conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using an oblimin rotation. The scree plot revealed a three-factor solution. We dropped one item due to a low loading on its intended factor, and one item due to a high cross-loading with another factor, leaving a final scale containing 12 items. Factor loadings for retained items are presented in

Table B.1. Inter-factor correlations and alphas are presented in Table B.2. All retained items loaded onto their intended factors, had focal loadings above .52, and had cross-loadings below .23. These results provide evidence that our scale captures variance in three distinct feedback-seeking motives.

Table B.1

EFA Factor Loadings

Item	Image	Instrumental	Ego
Knew it would enhance the way you saw them.	**.82**	-.07	-.04
Were taking an opportunity to remind you of their accomplishments.	**.74**	.09	-.08
Were trying to influence how you see them.	**.73**	-.07	.07
Were aiming to communicate to you that they are competent.	**.63**	.05	.08
Were searching for hints that could help them improve their performance.	.04	**.70**	-.02
Wanted to improve their job-related skills.	-.18	**.65**	.00
Wanted to learn more about the performance expectations that others set for them.	-.02	**.56**	.07
Wanted to "learn the ropes" after new performance goals and expectations were set for them.	.16	**.55**	-.07
Wanted to understand whether they were meeting expectations.	.03	**.53**	.08
Were looking for you to reassure them.	-.10	-.08	**.89**
Were hoping you would make them feel more confident about performing a specific task.	.00	.05	**.64**
Wanted to feel better about their performance.	.22	.13	**.60**

Note. $N = 136$. All items were preceded by the stem "They sought feedback because they...". Factor loadings for intended motive of each statement are bolded.

Table B.2

Scale Development Pilot Study 2 Inter-Factor Correlations

	M	*SD*	1		2	3
1. Instrumental	3.73	.68	*.74*			
2. Image Enhancement	2.91	.92	.23	**	*.82*	
3. Ego Enhancement	3.85	.77	.29	***	.17	*.76*

Note. $N = 136$. Alpha coefficients are italicized and displayed on the diagonal. ***$p < .001$ **$p < .01$.

Appendix C

All vignettes were preceded by these instructions:

Please imagine you are a manager at a small advertising firm. You have 15 employees that directly report to you, one of whom is named Joe. Joe's performance is generally middle of the pack, and you have been supervising him for three years.

One day, you get the following email from Joe:

A: High Image Enhancement Motives, Low Instrumental Motives

From: Joe Caldwell <joe@advertace.com>
Sent: October 10, 2019 9:06:24 AM
Subject: Feedback

Hey,

Could you give me some feedback on this logo? Don't worry too much about the font, I still need to work on that. But I think the other aspects of it are pretty good and would love to hear your thoughts on them.

Thanks in advance,

Joe Caldwell
Graphic Designer

Phone: 835-922-2567
Web: www.advertace.com
Email: joe@advertace.com

You've given Joe feedback before that he hasn't used, so you are skeptical any feedback you give him will translate into significant improvements in the quality of his report. You also know that Joe is bragging, and hoping you will give him some praise. It seems like he is asking you for feedback in an attempt to enhance the way you think about him and his work, perhaps to put himself in a good position for a pay raise.

B: High Image Enhancement Motives, High Instrumental Motives

From: Joe Caldwell <joe@advertace.com>
Sent: October 10, 2019 9:06:24 AM
Subject: Feedback

Hey,

Could you give me some feedback on this logo? Don't worry too much about the font, I still need to work on that. But I think the other aspects of it are pretty good and would love to hear your thoughts on them.

Thanks in advance,

Joe Caldwell
Graphic Designer

Phone: 835-922-2567
Web: www.advertace.com
Email: joe@advertace.com

You know that every time you give Joe feedback, he works hard to implement it, so you feel like any feedback you give him will translate into significant improvements in the quality of his logo. You also know that Joe is bragging, and hoping you will give him some praise. It seems like he is asking you for feedback in an attempt to enhance the way you think about him and his work, perhaps to put himself in a good position for a pay raise.

C: Low Image Enhancement Motives, Low Instrumental Motives

From: Joe Caldwell <joe@advertace.com>
Sent: October 10, 2019 9:06:24 AM
Subject: Feedback

Hey,

Could you give me some feedback on this logo? I think the font still needs some work, so I would love to hear your thoughts on how I could improve it. But I think all the other aspects are pretty good, so you don't have to spend much time on them.

Thanks in advance,

Joe Caldwell
Graphic Designer

Phone: 835-922-2567
Web: www.advertace.com
Email: joe@advertace.com

You've given Joe feedback before that he hasn't used, so you are skeptical any feedback you give him will translate into significant improvements in the quality of his logo. You also don't think that Joe is bragging or looking for praise. It doesn't seem like he is asking for feedback in order to enhance the way you think about him or his work.

D: Low Image Enhancement Motives, High Instrumental Motives

From: Joe Caldwell <joe@advertace.com>
Sent: October 10, 2019 9:06:24 AM
Subject: Feedback

Hey,

Could you give me some feedback on this logo? I think the font still needs some work, so I would love to hear your thoughts on how I could improve it. But I think all the other aspects are pretty good, so you don't have to spend much time on them.

Thanks in advance,

Joe Caldwell
Graphic Designer

Phone: 835-922-2567
Web: www.advertace.com
Email: joe@advertace.com

You know that every time you give Joe feedback, he works hard to implement it, so you feel like any feedback you give him will translate into significant improvements in the quality of his logo. You also don't think that Joe is bragging or looking for praise. It doesn't seem like he is asking for feedback in order to enhance the way you think about him or his work.

Appendix D

Appendix E

Vignette Validation

Prior to running Study 2, we developed four vignettes describing an employee's feedback-seeking behaviour, each exhibiting cues for high or low levels of instrumental and image enhancement motives, respectively. In other words, we used a 2 (perceived image enhancement motive: high, low) by 2 (perceived instrumental motive: high, low) between-subjects design (see Appendix C). The purpose of this pilot was to ensure we were manipulating the perceived motives as intended.

Method

Sample. We recruited a new sample of 200 participants with managerial experience from MTurk, excluding people who had already participated in any previous study for this research. Participants were paid $0.50 USD for completing this study. We excluded 23 participants from analyses due to failed attention checks and an additional nine cases for missing or duplicate MTurk IDs, leaving a final sample of $N = 168$ participants to be included in analyses. Our final sample was 51% male, 71% Caucasian, had a mean age of 37.28 years ($SD = 10.59$), and an average of 6.93 years ($SD = 7.16$) of managerial experience.

Procedure. We ensured that participants had managerial experience by employing a pre-consent pre-screen questionnaire. That is, participants answered three questions prior to viewing study materials (e.g. Are you currently, or have you ever been, self employed? Do you currently, or have you ever, worked abroad?) and were only allowed to continue to the study if they responded "yes" to the following question: "Are you currently, or have you ever

been, a manager at work?" Participants were then randomly assigned to read one of four vignettes describing a hypothetical employee's feedback-seeking behaviour and rate that employee's perceived motives using the Perceived Feedback-Seeking Motives Scale. Afterward, participants provided their demographic information.

Measures.

Again, we used the measure of perceived feedback-seeking motives developed for this research. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with 12 statements regarding the reasons they thought the hypothetical subordinate had asked for feedback (See Table E.1 for means, SDs, and alphas).

Results

In order to test whether participants perceived the vignette manipulations as intended, we conducted two regression analyses (See Table E.2). First, we regressed perceived instrumental motive ratings on instrumental condition (effect coded as high = 1, low = -1), image enhancement condition (effect coded as high = 1, low = -1), as well as their interaction. We found that instrumental condition significantly predicted instrumental motive ratings (b = .19, SE = .06, p < 001). Additionally, neither the image enhancement condition (b = -.06, SE = .06, p = .233) of the vignette nor the interaction between instrumental condition and image enhancement (b = .01, SE = .06, p = .871) condition were significant predictors of instrumental motive ratings. Thus, participants perceived vignettes intended as high on instrumental motives as higher on instrumental motives than vignettes intended as low on instrumental motives.

Next, we regressed perceived image enhancement motive ratings on instrumental condition (effect coded as high = 1, low = -1), image enhancement condition (effect coded as high = 1, low = -1), and their interaction. We found support for our manipulation in that image enhancement condition was a significant predictor of perceived image enhancement motives (b = .52, SE = .07, p < .001), with vignettes intended to be high on image enhancement motives being rated as having significantly higher image enhancement motivation than vignettes intended to display low levels of image enhancement motivation. However, we did find an unexpected significant interaction between instrumental condition and image enhancement condition on perceived image enhancement motive ratings (b = .20, SE = .07, p = .003) (see Figure E.1). After plotting the interaction, we determined that our vignettes were still acceptable to use moving forward because both simple slopes were significant and positive. That is, although there was a stronger effect of image enhancement condition on image enhancement ratings when the person in the vignette also displayed high levels of instrumental motivation, there was still a strong positive relationship between image enhancement condition and image enhancement rating when the person in the vignette had low levels of instrumental motivation.

Table E.1

Vignette Validation Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

	M	*SD*	*1*		*2*		*3*
1. Instrumental	3.52	.75	*.79*				
2. Image	3.55	1.03	-.03		*.91*		
3. Ego	3.89	.74	.25	***	.36	***	*.80*

Note. $N = 168$. Alpha coefficients are italicized and presented on the diagonal. *** $p < .001$.

Table E.2

Vignette Validation Regression Results

Dependent Variable	Predictors	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	R^2
Instrumental Rating	Intercept	3.52	.06	62.4	<.001	.08
	Instrumental Condition	.19	.06	3.44	<.001	
	Image Condition	-.06	.06	-1.20	.233	
	Instrumental*Image	.01	.06	0.16	.871	
Image Enhancement Rating	Intercept	3.53	.07	52.4	<.001	.30
	Instrumental Condition	-.09	.07	-1.39	.167	
	Image Condition	.52	.07	7.69	<.001	
	Instrumental*Image	.20	.07	3.02	.003	

Note. $N = 168$. Conditions were effect coded (high = 1, low = -1).

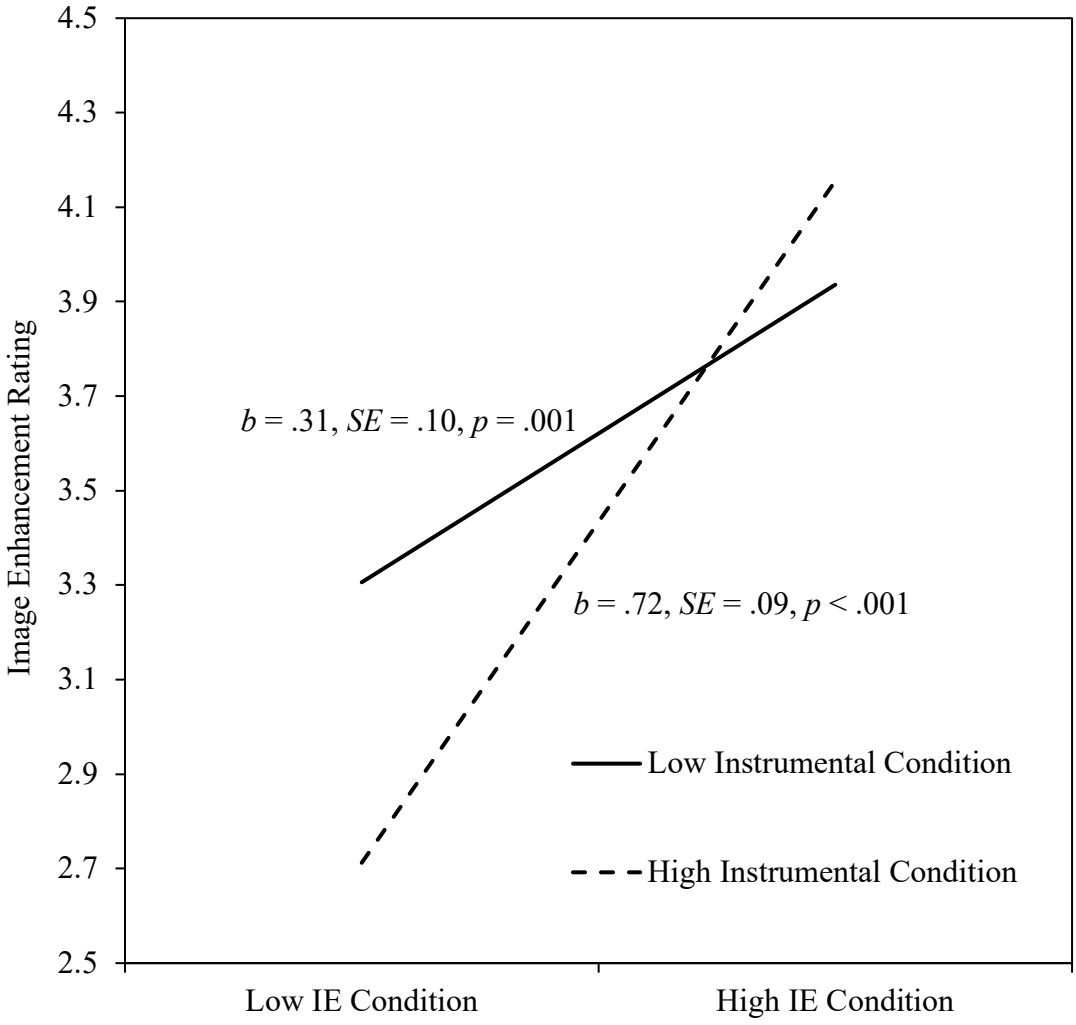

Figure E.1. Interaction between instrumental condition and image enhancement condition in predicting image enhancement ratings of vignettes (IE= Image Enhancement).